



LAGORCHESTES FASCIATUS

Illustrated by William Lloyd

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Banded Hare-Kangaroo.

Kangarus fasciatus, Péron et Lesueur, Voy. aux Terr. Aust., tom. i. p. 114. pl. 27.—Desm. Mamm., part i. p. 274.

Halmaturus elegans, Cuv. Règne Anim., tom. i. p. 187.

Bettongia fasciata, Gould, Mon. of Macropodidæ, pl.

Lagorchestes albipilis, Gould, Ann. and Mag. of Nat. Hist., vol. x. 1842, p. 2.

Macropus (Lagorchestes) fasciatus, Waterh. Nat. Hist. of Mamm., vol. i. p. 87.

I BELIEVE that this beautiful species is noticed for the first time in the Voyage of the celebrated Dampier, but MM. Péron and Lesueur are undoubtedly entitled to the credit of making it known to science. It was during their voyage to the “Terres Australes,” and while exploring the western coasts of Australia, that they met with it on Dirk Hartogs and the neighbouring islands, where it was found among the impenetrable low thickets formed of a species of *Mimosa*; “from these bushes,” says MM. Péron and Lesueur, “it cuts away the lower branches and spines so as to form galleries communicating one with another, in which it takes refuge in time of danger. The females bring forth but one young one at a time. Although abundant on the islands, none were to be found on the main land. These little Kangaroos, like all feeble animals which have neither the power of attack nor of defence, are extremely timid. The slightest noise caused them to take flight to the thick brushwood in which their galleries are constructed, and where it is impossible to pursue them; hence, although very common, they are difficult to procure.” Although the above-mentioned naturalists were unable to discover the animal on the main land, the researches of more recent travellers, aided by the facilities afforded by the colonization of the country, have shown that it is not only abundant there, but enjoys a most extensive range. Mr. Gilbert found it far in the interior of the Swan River Colony, and Mr. Eyre, one of the most indefatigable of Australian explorers, states that he frequently observed it in the Murray Scrub of South Australia; here then we have a range of many thousand square miles of country as the known habitat of this beautiful species, and we may consequently infer, that every intermediate district between Southern and Western Australia favourable to its habits is tenanted by it. Mr. Gilbert states that it is called *Marnine* by the natives of the interior of Western Australia, and is only to be found in densely thick scrubs, on flats and on the edges of swamps, where the small brush *Melaleuca* grows so thickly, that it is almost impossible for a man to force his way through; its runs being under this, the animal escapes even the quick eye of a native. The only possible means of obtaining it is by having a number of natives to clear the spot, and two or three with dogs and guns to watch for it.

During an excursion into the interior Mr. Gilbert was so fortunate as to cross one of its haunts, but so dense was the vegetation, that after three days of severe toil, he was only able to secure a single specimen; he adds, that it appears to run in company with the *Damas*, which being more numerous were continually presenting themselves and disappointing him, the vegetation being much too thick to distinguish the one from the other until after they had been shot. The natives are in the habit of burning these thickets at intervals of three years, and by this means destroy very great numbers; and this, in fact, appears to be the only plan they could very well adopt for capturing both the *Marnine* and the *Dama*, for the mere treading down an open space, as is done at King George’s Sound, will not answer here: the specimen he procured was a male, and weighed three pounds and three-quarters.

From the period of MM. Péron and Lesueur’s Voyage in 1800—1804 until 1842, when M. Priess, a German naturalist, visited Western Australia, no example of this little Kangaroo was sent to Europe. The specimens from which the description published by the former gentlemen was taken, still form part of the collection of the “Jardin des Plantes” at Paris, but from long exposure to a powerful light, and their muzzles having in the course of time become denuded of hair, their appearance is so much altered, that I was induced to believe that the animal brought home by M. Priess was both generically and specifically distinct; and therefore, while, from their apparently naked muzzles, I placed the Paris animals in the genus *Bettongia*, I referred the recently received specimen to the genus *Lagorchestes*, and gave it the name of *L. albipilis*; this error has been corrected by Mr. Waterhouse, who, after a careful examination and

comparison of specimens, satisfied himself that they were identical,—an opinion in which I now entirely coincide.

The flesh is said to resemble that of the rabbit, but has a slight aromatic flavour, arising probably from the nature of the plants on which they feed, nearly all of which are fragrant.

When MM. Péron and Lesueur visited the islands, all the females carried young in their pouch, and the devotedness with which they sought to save their offspring was truly admirable; although wounded they flew with the young in the pouch, and never left them until, overcome with fatigue and loss of blood, they could no longer carry them; they then stopped, and squatting themselves on their hind-legs, helped the young to get out of the pouch by means of the fore-feet, and sought to place them in a situation favourable for retreat.

Mr. Gilbert states that it makes no nest, but when on the plains squats precisely like a hare.

The sexes are very similar, and may be thus described:—

The fur is very long and soft; its general colour greyish, variegated with black, white, and rusty red, the latter colour being most conspicuous round the eyes; on the back are numerous narrow, transverse black bands; these are somewhat irregular and not well-defined; the spaces between the bands are partly of a rusty red, and partly whitish; the white joins the dark band, and is gradually shaded into the rusty red, to be followed by the next dark band; over the whole of the upper surface, sides and cheeks are numerous very long interspersed hairs, which have the exposed portion white, but, like the ordinary fur, are nearly black at the root; under surface dirty white, with a considerable admixture of grey; the ears are clothed with lengthened white hairs internally, and externally with short hairs finely freckled with brownish black and white; fore-feet dirty rust-red; tarsi pale rusty red penciled with blackish; sides of both tarsi and toes pale brown; tail tolerably well covered with short adpressed brownish grey hairs; on the under side the hairs are somewhat longer and of a brownish white; on the upper surface is a narrow blackish streak, and on the apical third the hairs are lengthened, and form a small dark crest at the point; they are sometimes an inch in length.

The Plate represents an adult male about the size of life.